



Specialist Four Eugene Buckley



Photo of Specialist Buckley on the day he was awarded the Silver Star Medal.

Just after dusk on April 16th 1968, the 1st Engineer Battalion was tasked to cut a landing zone for a Vietnamese Army (ARVN) unit. The ARVN unit had taken heavily casualties and was still engaged and surrounded by the enemy. Several dozen severe casualties required immediate evacuation. Specialist Buckley, who was a Combat Engineer, and another soldier volunteered for the rescue mission. At 2:00 a.m., both soldiers were lowered from a helicopter, with a chainsaw and several axes, into the jungle near Tan Uyan, Vietnam.

The ARVN perimeter was under constant enemy rifle and machinegun fire. Even though the noise from his chainsaw drew more enemy fire, Specialist Buckley continued clearing the much needed landing zone.

He continued to enlarge the clearing and directed other soldiers to assist with the axes. After hours of intense labor, the landing zone was large enough to allow helicopters to land. Fifty casualties were evacuated before concentrated enemy fire prohibited further use of the landing zone. Buckley was forced to remain with the ARVN unit that fought its way out over the next few days. Buckley's actions saved many lives and for these actions he was awarded the Silver Star Medal. The citation reads, *"For gallantry in action while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam: On this date (17 April 1968), Specialist Buckley was serving with his engineer company. His unit was requested to provide assistance for a regiment of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam which desperately needed to have a landing zone cut in the thick jungle near its night defensive position to facilitate the evacuation of approximately 50 casualties. Specialist Buckley unhesitatingly volunteered for the mission, although he realized it involved being airlifted into hostile territory in darkness. At approximately 0200 hours, he was lowered from a hovering helicopter by a 60 foot rope into the jungle near Tan Uyan. The South Vietnamese defensive position was receiving continuous small arms fire at this time, and he was an extremely vulnerable target during his descent into the unsecured area. Specialist Buckley contacted the friendly elements and worked throughout the night to clear the vital landing zone. During this time he was continuously engaged by hostile fire, but this did not deter him from completing the task. His courageous initiative and calm perseverance were major factors enabling the numerous casualties to be evacuated from the remote area. Specialist Four Buckley's unquestionable valor while engaging in military operations involving conflict with an insurgent force is in keeping with the finest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself, the First Infantry Division, and the United States Army."*

